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GAO Reports on Use of Herbicides on Federal Lands

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), in a 65 page report on the use of herbicides on federal lands, says that opposition to using herbicides will not go away and will continue to have an effect on vegetation management decisions unless concerned agencies can better justify their decisions. The federal accounting agency says that better data is needed to determine the extent to which herbicides should be used.

According to the GAO report (CED-81-46), the USDA-Forest Service and the USDI-Bureau of Land Management need to more thoroughly evaluate nonchemical methods to control vegetation. Such evaluations would provide better information for making decisions and provide more credibility in dealing with opposition to herbicides. Copies of the report can be obtained from the U.S. General Accounting Office, Document Handling, POB 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20760; telephone (202) 275-6241.

Participants in 2,4,5-T Hearings Try to Negotiate Settlement

Cancellation hearings on 2,4,5-T and Silvex were recently interrupted to allow the participants opportunity to negotiate a settlement. The hearings, in progress for more than a year, will be reconvened if a settlement cannot be reached by June 9.

If a settlement cannot be reached, and if the hearings run their full course, we are still probably two years away from a final decision. According to EPA, the "benefits" portion of the hearings will probably not be completed until late this year. After that, the issues of "risk" would then have to be argued.

IBT Scandal and Forest Pesticides

The IBT scandal continues to cause public concern over the safety of many registered pesticides, including some used in forestry. If you recall, IBT (Industrial Bio-Test Laboratories) is the toxicological testing company accused of falsifying test results submitted to support the registrations of some pesticides and other chemicals.

Since 1977, EPA has been reexamining the IBT studies. With this work almost complete, the environmental agency, together with the USDA-Forest Service and the USDI-Bureau of Land Management issued a joint statement saying there is no reason to believe the use of involved forest chemicals pose unreasonable risk to human health or the environment. Registrations of involved chemicals are not supported by IBT tests alone; they are also supported by other valid studies.

According to the joint statement, IBT conducted one study for carbaryl. That study was considered valid. There were no IBT studies for cacodylic acid, MCPA, thiram or dinoseb. Replacement studies on asulam, dicamba, krenite, MSMA, and picloram have been submitted. Only a few short-term studies were done by IBT on atrazine, Bacillus thuringiensis, 2,4-D, and simazine; review of these studies is nearly complete.

Sevin®, Dylox®, and Orthene® compared by EPA

EPA recently compared the safety of three pesticides used in gypsy moth control programs. EPA says that unreasonable adverse effects are unlikely from the use of any of the three.

Toxicity information on Sevin® (carbaryl), Dylox® (tichlorfon), and Orthene® (acephate) was compared by EPA in response to inquiries arising from the Pennsylvania gypsy moth control program.

Refer to the Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News, April 22, 1981, for more information.

Institute for Biological Control

The USDA-Forest Service is studying a proposal to establish an institute for biological control of forest insect and disease pests.

According to the draft proposal, the mission of the institute would be to develop biological technology to manage pests of eastern forest trees. The proposed institute would serve as a visible contact point for individuals, organizations, and agencies seeking information on biological control. If approved, the institute would probably be located in Hamden, Connecticut.

Tordon® 10K Controversy in Wisconsin

Douglas County officials in northwest Wisconsin, banned the use of Tordon® 10K (picloram) on county forests. They also want to be notified of its use on non county-owned land. Concerned groups are also trying to prevent the state Department of Natural Resources from using the herbicide on State land. Picloram is used to establish and maintain wild life browse areas.

Citizen concerns arise from reports that picloram is persistent, causes cancer, and contains cyanide. Apparently, some are worried about contamination of shallow wells and surface waters, and that wild life may contaminate their gardens with picloram laden excrement.

The cancer scare arises from a National Cancer Institute pathologist who disagrees with his colleagues over interpretation of test results.

Refer to Wisconsin Pest Management, Vol. 4: (5), April 6, 1981, for additional details.

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